

38 ÉMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND EEFOEMER

which was given Mm because his pronunciation of various words differed from that of Ms Provençal school-fellows.

TM's was not to be wondered at, the parent to whom he owed Ms mother tongue being a Beauceronne.

Other anecdotes which picture Mm suffering from an impediment in his speech may be taken with a grain of salt, perhaps, as the official records show that he gained prizes and *aeccessits* for recitation. As had been the case at the Pension Notre

Dame, he formed a close friendship with a few of his school-fellows. One of these was a lawyer's son, named Marguery,

a bright, merry" lad with musical tastes, who a few years later, to the general amazement, blew Ms brains out in a fit of insanity. Another was Antony Valabrkgue, afterwards a

tasteful poet, whose family, curiously enough, became connected with that of Captain Dreyfus. Valabr&gue being some years younger than Zola, their companionship at school did not go very far; but they subsequently corresponded,

and intimacy ensued between them. At the college Zola's more particular chums were Cezanne and Bailie, the former afterwards well known as an impressionist painter, the

second as a professor at the Ecole Polytechnique. Bailie, Cezanne, and Zola became inseparables; and though all three

were fairly diligent pupils in class-time, they indulged in many a boyish prank together during the earlier years of their sojourn at the college.

One morning, in a spirit of mischievousness, they burnt the shoes of a school-fellow, a lank lad called Mimi4a-Mort, *alias* the Skeleton Day Boarder, who smuggled snuff into the school. Then one winter evening they purloined some matches in the chapel and smoked dry chestnut leaves in reed pipes there. Zola, who was the ringleader on that